

Baton Rouge, LA – The Advocate Juvenile Justice wins Harvard award

ADVOCATE STAFF REPORT

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The Louisiana Office of Juvenile Justice has been recognized by Harvard University for its innovative programming, an OJJ spokeswoman said Thursday.

OJJ's Service Coordination Model was recognized through the "Bright Ideas" program, an initiative of the broader Innovations in American Government Awards program at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government, Jerel M. Giarrusso, OJJ's spokeswoman, said in a news release .

"We are very pleased and humbled that our Service Coordination Model was chosen as a Bright Idea," OJJ Deputy Secretary Mary L. Livers said in the news release.

The Service Coordination Model was developed and implemented to provide single case management that allows consistent, individualized management and oversight of all cases, Giarrusso said.

Youth entering the OJJ system are assigned a probation/parole officer who handles their case from entry until exit from the system, she said. The officer becomes familiar with the needs of the youth and their family, and assures that needed services are in place, Giarrusso said.

Better outcomes for youth and decreased recidivism have resulted from this innovative program, she said.

Service coordination addresses the needs of the youth in the least restrictive environment, Giarrusso said.

"As we searched for ways to provide better outcomes for our youth, OJJ staff conducted extensive research into then-current best practices," Livers said. "Service coordination is an important component of reform of the OJJ juvenile justice system."

OJJ operates three secure-care facilities in the state for juvenile offenders: Jetson Center for Youth, Baton Rouge; Swanson Center for Youth, Monroe; and Bridge City Center for Youth near New Orleans.